INFANTRY LETTERS

SOLVING THE ITV PROBLEM

The M901 improved TOW vehicle (ITV), once the mainstay of the Central European defense, has fallen on hard times. This antiarmor system failed to see much action in the Persian Gulf war, primarily because VII Corps deployed to Saudi Arabia without its complement of ITVs. Given the Corps' imminent offensive role, that decision appears sound. The ITV does not move as rapidly as the Abrams-Bradley combined arms team and could well have slowed the momentum of offensive operations.

Last fall, the U.S. Army decided to reduce operating costs in the out-years by washing the ITV and other older systems out of the inventory before 1994. Unfortunately, though, the Army also decided recently to defer procurement of the new line-of-sight, antitank (LOSAT) weapon system, and this could significantly reduce the antitank capability of mechanized infantry battalions until a new system is fielded.

The current downsizing of the Army offers the infantry community some options to consider in solving this problem:

• M3A2 cavalry fighting vehicles (CFVs) made available from deactivated heavy forces could replace ITVs in those mechanized infantry battalions that are programmed to remain on active duty. Like the ITV, the CFV carries 12 TOW missiles and provides mobility and armor protection comparable to those of the Bradley fighting vehicle. This option would also preserve Echo Company space authorizations until LOSAT can be fielded.

• Separate ITV-equipped antitank battalions (up to four companies, 48 launchers) could be organized in I Corps and XVIII Airborne Corps to reinforce light divisions, pending deployment of the armored gun system (AGS). ITVs have gunner-under-armor survivability and twice the stowed missiles of the TOW-equipped high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV). To alleviate the logistical burden on supported divisions, these battalions would have their own direct support maintenance, track recovery, and missile resupply teams. The best ITVs culled from all available assets could be used to equip these battalions.

• The reduced density of TOW launchers in active forces provides an opportunity to improve gunner and assistant gunner proficiency by increasing the number of live missiles fired in annual training. The Army still has a large stockpile of older, unimproved BGM-71 TOW missiles that are no longer considered effective against Soviet-developed improved armor and explosive reactive armor.

In summary, it may be possible to solve the ITV problem while benefitting both heavy and light forces.

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PREVENTING FRIENDLY CASUALTIES

During Operation DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, 24th Infantry Division, developed and used a number of techniques designed to prevent friendly casualties. These techniques were the result of many hours of discussion by many staff members; other officers and soldiers contributed to the development of the battalion's tactical SOP. As commander of Company D at the time, I would like to share some of these techniques.

Because of the lack of a linear battlefield in AirLand Battle doctrine, it is often difficult to tell friend from foe, particularly during limited visibility. A leader must realize that combat is fast-paced and chaotic and that other units may be misoriented or performing missions he does not yet know about. If his soldiers cannot positively identify a target, they simply do not engage that target until it is identified or shoots at them.

A number of techniques are available to help a commander control direct fires. First, leaders should designate sectors of fire and ensure that each unit fires only within its own sector. If the soldiers in a subordinate unit positively identify a target and can engage it without endangering a friendly unit, they should do so.

On the basis of the sector of fire and the position of his subordinate units, the leader can designate a weapon control status (WCS)—either *free, tight*, or *hold*—directed to platoon and squad level.

WCS *free* means the unit can engage any target not positively identified as friendly. This status is used when the unit is the lead element during movement and no friendly units are to its front.

WCS *tight* allows a unit to engage any positively identified enemy target at will, while WCS *hold* allows a unit to fire only in self-defense. *Tight* and *hold* are used when friendly units are in the unit's area of operation.

When a unit does identify a target, the platoon's designated shooter engages initially. A designated shooter is the platoon's best shot and the one who confirms the range to the target for the rest of the platoon. Once the target is acquired, the rest of the platoon engages it until the target either surrenders or is destroyed.

The designated shooter can mark the target location with the Bradley's 25mm

HEI-T (high explosive incendiary-tracer), with 5.56mm tracer, or with M203 HE illumination rounds—basically, anything that allows the platoon to engage the target quickly.

Friendly casualties can also be caused by friendly munitions. Air Force cluster bomb units (CBUs) and artillery dual-purpose improved conventional munitions (DPICMs), for example, do have a dud rate, and leaders must be aware that they risk casualties when they assault an objective on which these type munitions have been fired.

There are several passive techniques leaders can use to improve friendly identification and reduce the probability of friendly casualties. VS-17 panels, reflective tape, chemical lights, and battery-operated infrared lights are all available to help with friendly identification. Whatever technique is chosen, redundancy must be used to prevent friendly casualties.

Finally, leaders must not send units out without alerting adjacent units one last time. One technique is to do a net call on the battalion command net to remind everyone that a patrol is either outbound or inbound. Enough time should be allowed for the warning to be disseminated to all adjacent units.

Friendly casualties will continue to haunt us, but with proper training and coordination, they can be reduced significantly.

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EXPERIENCE AT BROWN 1

Decisions made in combat can carry far more weight than those made during peacetime. For those of us who saw combat for the first time during Operation DESERT STORM, the effect of even our most fleeting decisions soon became clear.

As dawn broke on the morning of 25 February, my battalion—the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry—had been moving unopposed through Iraq for nearly 16 hours. To my relief, we had lost no tracks due to mechanical breakdown or any other mishap; our greatest threat had been the foul weather and the jagged rocks that plagued our route of march. That morning, we were to seize Objective Brown 1, the first of our march objectives leading to the Euphrates River Valley. Intelligence reports had told us that small-scale enemy engineer activities were being conducted in the area. But the intelligence updates we had received the previous night from divisional air cavalry units and ground cavalry to our front indicated that no enemy troops were in the Brown 1 area.

As we approached the objective area, my company, Company E, was on the battalion's right flank where we were to sweep around and form a hasty perimeter defense to the north, while the rest of the task force defended to the east, south, and west. As expected, we encountered no enemy fire moving onto the objective. But as my company moved to position in the north, I heard the Company A commander on the battalion radio saying that he was taking multiple prisoners. Sure enough, when I looked in his direction I saw enemy soldiers with raised hands coming out of holes and the few buildings left standing on the objective.

Contact with the enemy had been made. Instantly, one of my platoon leaders reported Iraqi soldiers in front of his position. The Iraqis were about 1,000 meters to the north and running away. Through my binoculars, I could see them clearly, carrying AK assault rifles and using terrain and foliage to mask their escape. The platoon leader wanted permission to open fire with MK-19 grenade launchers, which could easily reach the enemy at that range. I was hesitant since the battalion still had not received any fire and had yet to fire the first shots in anger. I reported the situation to battalion. My battalion commander was near our position and came over for a look. When he arrived, the Iraqis were difficult to see, as they had run into a shallow draw thick with foliage. He made the decision not to engage the fleeing Iraqis and to carry on with our assigned mission.

Even in hindsight, I am certain this was the correct decision, based on the facts at hand. We later continued the attack, reached the Euphrates River and left Brown 1 far behind. As the war ended, we heard a report that an Army major involved in the logistical resupply of the forward units had been killed by a sniper near Objective Brown 1. I also learned that he had been an ROTC instructor and had taught my company executive officer in college. I have often wondered whether the soldiers we had allowed to escape had anything to do with the major's death. I probably will never know. But I learned an important lesson—that even the smallest, quickest decisions in combat can have far-reaching consequences.

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ARMY SCIENCE CONFERENCE

The 18th Army Science Conference will be held at the Hyatt Orlando in Orlando, Florida, 22-25 June 1992. This biennial event is intended to provide a forum for the presentation, discussion, and recognition of significant accomplishments by U.S. Army scientists and engineers in their efforts to support the combat soldier of tomorrow.

For further information, anyone who is interested may write to Army Science Conference, 4031 Colonel Glenn Highway, Dayton, OH 45431-1600, or call (513) 426-8530.

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